

Hanukkah!



by Roni Schotter ♦ illustrated by Marilyn Hafner

Jewish Concepts

Hanukkah commemorates a miraculous time in Jewish history. Back in the second century BCE, in the land that is now Israel, a small group of Jews called the Maccabees fought against the far larger Syrian-Greek army—and won! When the Jews reclaimed their Holy Temple, they discovered there was only enough oil to relight the ritual menorah for one day. Miraculously, that small amount of oil burned for eight whole days, just long enough for the Jews to procure more oil.

Arriving at or near the winter solstice, Hanukkah offers a welcome bit of light at the darkest time of the year. The central ritual of the holiday is lighting Hanukkah candles, which are symbols of persistence and faith in the midst of challenging times. When families gather together to light their menorahs, they remember how the Maccabees never gave up during their struggle. The small flames of the Hanukkah candles are a tiny, bright reminder to keep hope alive.

Families also celebrate Hanukkah by eating! Foods fried in oil like *latkes* (potato pancakes) and *sufganiyot* (donuts) are reminders of the oil in the Hanukkah story. Playing *dreidel* is another classic Hanukkah activity. The Hebrew letters on a dreidel stand for *nes gadol haya sham*—“a great miracle happened there.” Happy Hanukkah!



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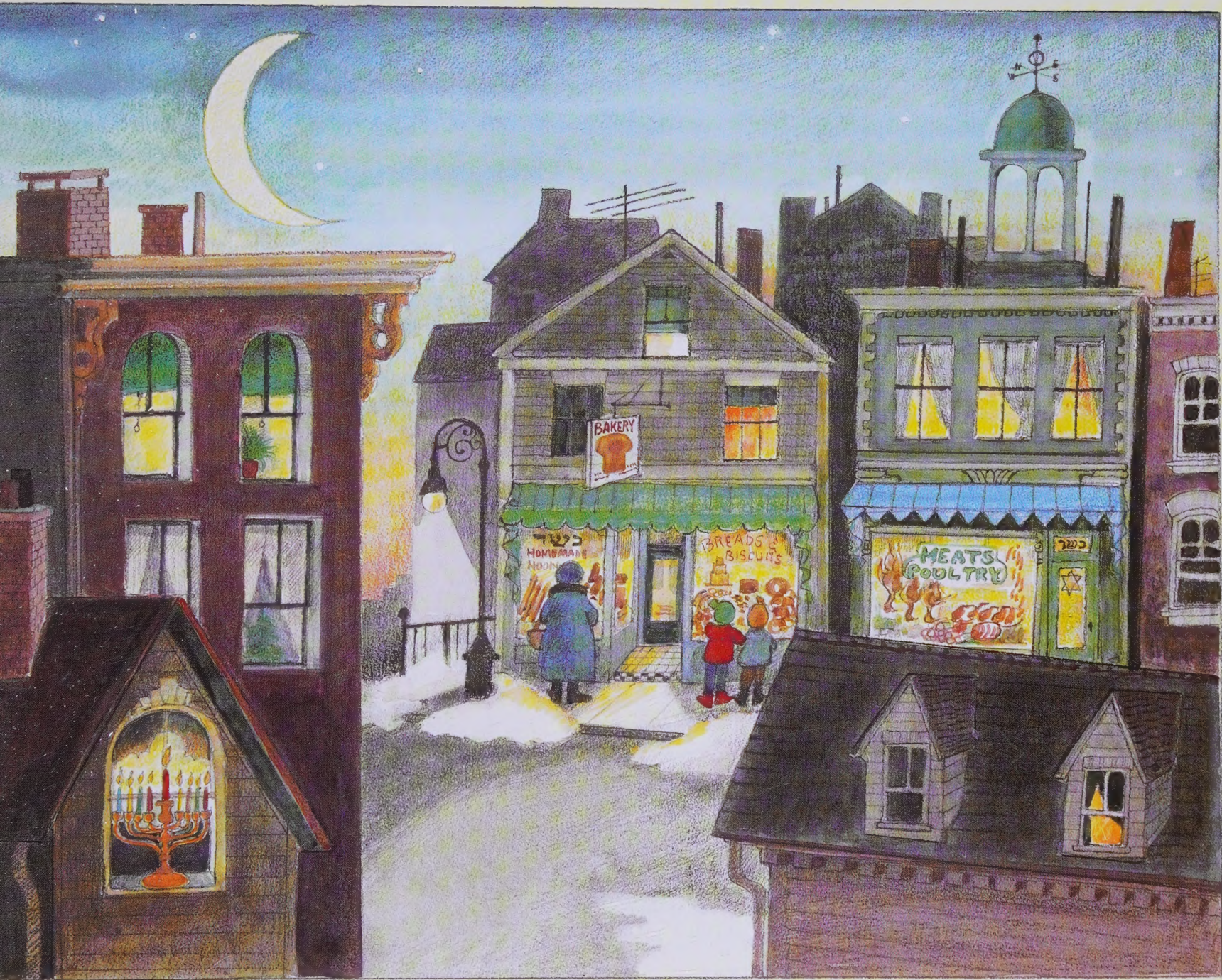


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In darkest December
Night steals in early
And whisks away the light.



But warm inside,
Mama, Papa, and Grandma Rose
Light the sun that is the menorah.





While Nora and Dan,
Ruthie and Sam
Sing a song
That is a prayer.





“Birthday!” Moe points and drops his bottle. “Hot!”
“No, Hanukkah,” Sam says, “Say, ‘Hanukkah,’ Moe.”
“Abadah, Moe,” Moe says. “Abadah!” and drools on Sam’s hand.

Nora and Dan, in the kitchen,
Fry some batter.
Flip, flap here.
Flip, flop there.
Potato pancakes in the air.
Latkes flying everywhere!









Ruthie, in her bedroom,
Mixes some paint.
A drop of blue,
A drop of red,
A drop of purple
On Rabbit's head.





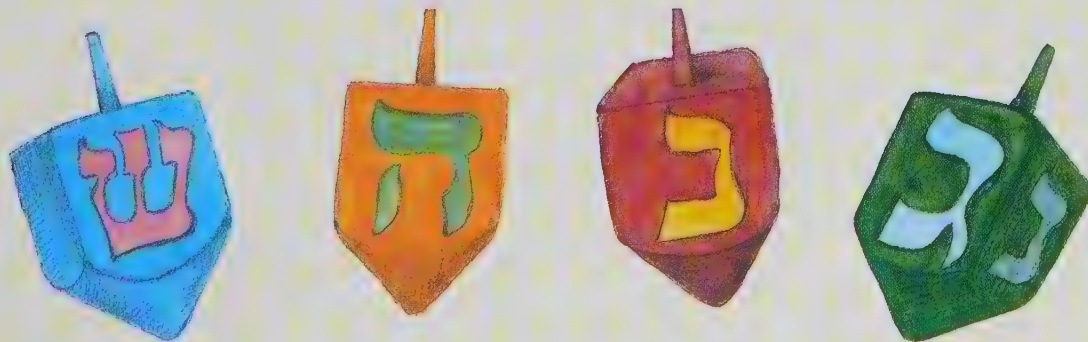


While off in a corner, tucked away, Sam shapes a dreidel of clay.

“Top!” Moe shouts, spinning round and round.

“Yes, dreidel,” Sam says. “For Hanukkah. Say ‘Hanukkah,’ Moe.”

“Anoohah, Moe,” Moe says. “Anoohah!” and drools on Sam’s foot.



Then...
One by one
Their gifts in hand,
The children gather
Round.









Grandma carries her favorite dish,
Pot roast, warm, and brown, and rich.
Papa brings his salad, cool and crisp,
And Mama, her applesauce.
“Dee-licious!” Moe says.



“The latkes have landed! The latkes have landed!”
Sam shouts, holding out his plate.

Moe grabs five, unable to wait.



And, as the Hanukkah candles
Lean head to head,
So does the family...

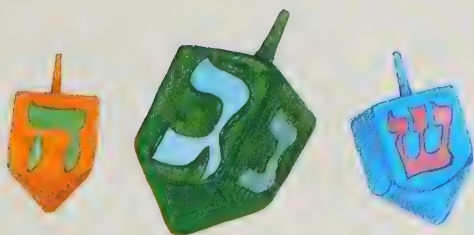
“Ohhh!”

“Ahhh!”

“Ummm!”

“Yummm!”

“Burp!”





But wait... there's more.
There's no escape.
It's Grandma's famous lemon cake!





And cookies,
And candy,
And fruit,
And nuts,
And now *that's all*.
Enough's enough!







Time for presents
Or what's a party?
For songs...
For dances...

And something more...

Love!

Light!

Hanukkah!





“Say ‘Hanukkah,’ Moe,” Sam says. “Come on, Moe. Say ‘Hanukkah!’”
“Anoo...” Moe gurgles. “Hanu-kkah!”
Moe shouts and hugs Sam. “Hanukkah!”



And, as the candles burn low and lose their light,
Eight sleepy people say, "GOOD NIGHT."



★ The Story of Hanukkah* ★

A long, long time ago in the land of Israel, the most special place for the Jewish people was the Temple (synagogue) in Jerusalem. The Temple contained many beautiful objects, including a tall golden menorah. Unlike menorahs of today, this one had seven (rather than nine) branches. Instead of being lit by candles or light bulbs, this menorah burned oil. Every evening, oil would be poured into the cups that sat on top of the menorah. The Temple would be filled with shimmering light.

At the time of the Hanukkah story, a mean king named Antiochus ruled over the land of Israel. “I don’t like these Jewish people,” declared Antiochus. “They are so different from me. I don’t celebrate Shabbat or read from the Torah—so why should they?” Antiochus made many new, cruel rules. “No more celebrating Shabbat! No more going to the Temple, and no more Torah!” shouted Antiochus. He told his guards to go into the Temple and make a mess. They brought mud, stones, and garbage into the Temple. They broke furniture and knocked things down; they smashed the jars of oil that were used to light the menorah.

Antiochus and his soldiers made the Jews feel sad and angry. A Jewish man named Judah Maccabee said, “We must stop Antiochus! We must think of ways to make him leave the land of Israel.” At first, Judah’s followers, called the Maccabees, were afraid. “Judah,” they said, “Antiochus has so many soldiers. His soldiers carry such big weapons, and he uses huge elephants to fight his battles! How can we Jews, who don’t have weapons, fight against him?” Judah said, “If we think very hard and plan very carefully, we will be able to defeat him.” It took a long time, but at last the Maccabees chased Antiochus and his men out of Israel.

As soon as Antiochus and his soldiers were gone, the Jewish people ran to Jerusalem to clean their Temple. What a mess! The beautiful menorah was gone, and the floor was covered with trash, broken furniture, and pieces from the shattered jars of oil. The Maccabees built a new menorah. At first they worried they would not be able to light their new menorah, but they searched and searched until at last they found one tiny jar of oil—enough to light the menorah for just one evening. The Maccabees knew it would be at least eight days before they could get more oil, but they lit the menorah anyway. To their surprise, this little jar of oil burned for eight days. The Jewish people could not believe their good fortune. First their small army had chased away Antiochus’s large army, and now the tiny jar of oil had lasted for eight whole days!

The Jewish people prayed and thanked God for these miracles. Every year during Hanukkah, Jews light menorahs for eight days to remember the miracles that happened long ago.

From Your Friends at PJ Library

* The transliterated word *Hanukkah* can be spelled in a number of different ways, including *Chanukah*, *Chanuka*, etc.

In memory of the grandfathers and grandmothers – Big Al and Harvey, Sara, and, of course, Edna.
R.S.

In memory of my grandfather, Stephen.
M.H.



A Note from PJ Library®

Using This Book at Home

In this story, the grown-ups do a lot of the cooking and prepping, but the kids play big roles, too. Get everyone involved in your family's Hanukkah festivities:

Make latkes together. Frying foods in hot oil may be best left to parents, but mixing up batter? Kids can handle that! Pull together the ingredients for your favorite latke recipe, then get ready for the whole house to smell delicious (for days).

Decorate the house. The most beautiful Hanukkah decoration is your menorah, of course—but there's no need to stop there. Handmade posters and banners help get guests in a festive mood, and making them adds to the anticipation.

Make a dreidel. Sam shapes his from clay in this story, but you can also try making one out of cardboard, an egg carton, or even a marshmallow on a toothpick! As long as it has four sides and it spins, you're all set for a rousing game of dreidel.

For ideas to add more fun to your family's Hanukkah, visit pjlibrary.org/hanukkah.

About PJ Library

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